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CHINA AS A WORK OF ART.

BY MRS. OLIVER BELL BUNCE.



URELY nothing in the wide realm of industrial art is more beautiful than china. It has always been an art, but for some years it has become the fashion. In every village, in every township, not saying anything of the big cities, the women in all these places have made ceramic art an overpowering feature.

Every dinner, tea, soup, fish, game, and desert set can be purchased from the most reasonable of prices to the highest in value which can be counted

by hundreds, and yet all are artistic, tasteful and a never-failing charm, no matter what the expense is.

In the art of china making, the factories of Minton, Copeland, Coalport and Cauldron take the lead. These industries of art turn out every year triumphs in china. Every piece is finished with the utmost precision, and in all these centers, hundreds and hundreds of men are employed, whose sole object is to excel in this one branch of ceramic art.

Among the newest designs in china, the Royal Copenhagen ware should not be omitted, being only lately that this china for the table has made its appearance, but at a price so high that it only comes within the reach of few. All china has its name from the factories where it is produced. And without question, nowadays there is really no "best china maker." All accomplish such exquisite work as not to rival each other in any particular branch.

Of formal or informal social functions the oyster takes precedence for the first course.

To do justice to the artist, or designer, the china dealer boldly asserts the oyster plate is not a thing of beauty. It may be good in color, which color alone will charm the eye. Yet the shape of the dish, the indentations in which the oysters lie, are really, from an artistic standpoint, without intrinsic value in ways of decoration, and lovers of ceramic art make no plea for them as in other wares. The first object which meets the buyer's eye on entering the great china emporiums, such as Davis, Collamore & Co., are sets of china, in which every color is the scheme. They have a broad shelf devoted to this purpose, and they are so arranged as to be always for inspection

at all times. Among the sets which first claim our attention is the Crown Derby. It is ivory in tone, and has no decoration except the border, which is of a conventional pattern, rather French in style, in which festoons, small vines and the like are charmingly grouped. Now, the Crown Derby was formerly called the Chelsea Derby, from 1769 to 1773, until the King and Queen made a visit there, and then a crown was added; henceforth it became Crown Derby.

This superb set of artistic chinaware costs \$1,375. There is also another set of the same factory made similar in pattern, but not so elaborate, and can be purchased for the sum of \$1,000. Among the designs is one of Minton, in which an apple-green band and gold is the delicious scheme. With all these sets, the edges are generally etched, or picked out in gold in graceful lines. On the inside of this particular one is what the manufacturers call a row of pearls, and for the center there is a gold star, which, as a finisher, is most unique.

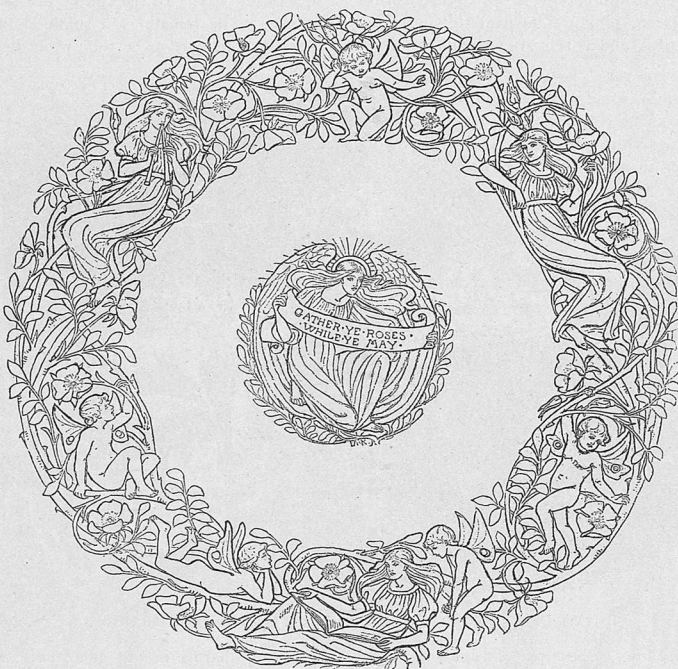
On a small stand, apart from the rest, is a set of dark blue

mazarine—a delight for all tables. It has again the broad band, but has gold in conventional pattern, verging toward the centers of dish and plate. It is of Minton make, and highly decorative. These band sets generally take precedence over those in which flower schemes are the subject.

Then there is a Royal Dresden set. This device is a delicate cream tone, only a tone, the border being in dark green grape leaves—the bunches of grapes in gold standing out in bold relief—a truly artistic dealing. This set costs only \$350, and has a goodly show of dishes—all graceful in shape, perfect in form.

And so the scale of prices descends as far as \$50 a set. Even these cheap affairs are beauties in their way—flower schemes generally reigning triumphant. Every color is well defined, and the price within the reach of all.

But for the truly artistic home woman, with money to spare, there are soup plates by the dozen which are ideal in ceramic art. Fashion has dictated there shall, on well-appointed tables, at formal dinners, be no soup tureens, the soup being served from the butler's pantry, so that each soup plate is really a treat before each cover. Of the newest forms, the band of apple-green, etched with gold, is the happy delight. Around this edge there are little points which project from the band, and on the inside the row of pearls, which quite completes this device. For its rival, if it can have one, the ivory-cream Derby presents itself in regal appearance. That creamy hue which is so soft and melting; the border picked out in gold,



DESIGN FOR A ROSE-WATER DISH. BY FLORENCE M. RUDLAND.

with vines and trceries which form such a delightful combination, leaving the center perfectly plain, the tint alone being its chief ornamentation. Then there is a Coalport in pink, which, like the rest, has an etched edge. But on this solid pink band are delightful little zigzag lines in gold, which are artistic in the extreme.

The Cauldron is offered us, of a dark mazarine blue, a deep border, etched like the rest, with a band on edge. The center a tint only, in tone of cream, which for a scheme is wonderful.

The Copeland ware has many imitators, but the true, the excellent thing itself is the cream tone alone, which is a charm for all tables. For the embroideries it is a fine set-off, and however plain the design may be, yet this creamy hue is a fine foil for all social functions, making a brilliancy effective and striking.

We now turn our admiration to the fish sets. By fish sets I mean the large platter, the dozen plates, and the sauce-boat. All of these charming creations are of one solid body of color, the decorations being given to the middle, in which the fish is a great pink salmon. Green, pink, or neutral tints are on hand, and all equally beautiful, and as sets are unrivalled. But there are plates which merely come by the dozen, works of art in their way, and it is to this artist in china that we bow down. Here is one in which the shadings are of delicate pinks, bluish and cream-white over the entire plate. Three small fish occupy the center in these graduated tones of water, yet every color so perfect, mingling, as it were, in a great ensemble. Another, the border a delicious pink, and over this solid border is a tracing in gold. In the center of the dish is a submarine scene, the fish in action, and to a looker-on, full of animal life. These plates might, indeed, serve as plaques, the colors so charmingly blended, and so admirably executed.

In one piece of Doulton ware the new departure for fish sets is most unique, the fish alone being the great center device. All have tints and tones radiating from this member of the finny tribe. The plate has no border, only a slight narrow gold edge. The china of vellum finish, and the design is by Wilson.

Then there are plates in which the sea shells are the successful plan; shells whose colors stand out in bold relief on the pure white background, a spray of coral adding at side, and forming a choice decorative set.

Here is a picture by Mitchell, which, if framed, would find a place in any dining-room. The tone of the plate is of sea greens, delicate pinks, melting grays, a fish swimming, in which coral, sea shells and tall grasses form the dealing; while another by the same artist has for its edge a scalloped and fluted design, the plate of ivory tint, the fish lying on a bank in which all delicate colorings prevail.

And so we have from this factory and that, plates whose tones in delicate greens, blush, and pink, form the entire scheme—plates in which rococo edge is the border, while the center is a picture of marine life.

As we progress along the covers or courses of which the formal dinner consists, the *entrée* dish claims our admiration. All are superb in different varieties, which excelling it is impossible to say. One is a beautiful Minton of pink, in which the *fleur-de-lis* is the conventional pattern. Another of gray tone, a mottled Quakerish tint, which for border has a rococo edge, and its center a spring branch of flowers whose petals are touched with gold, the subject being wild roses. Following this is the turquoise enamel, with spiral flutes and flowering designs in gold.

Our attention is now especially called to the Game Sets, which, for brilliancy, are unrivalled. A Minton plate which has an ivory ground and a border of turquoise picked out in pure whites and old rose, and the pattern itself standing out in a raised way. In the center are two wood ducks, male and female. The female is a subdued little body, whose brown dress is as demure as herself; while her mate, for strength and

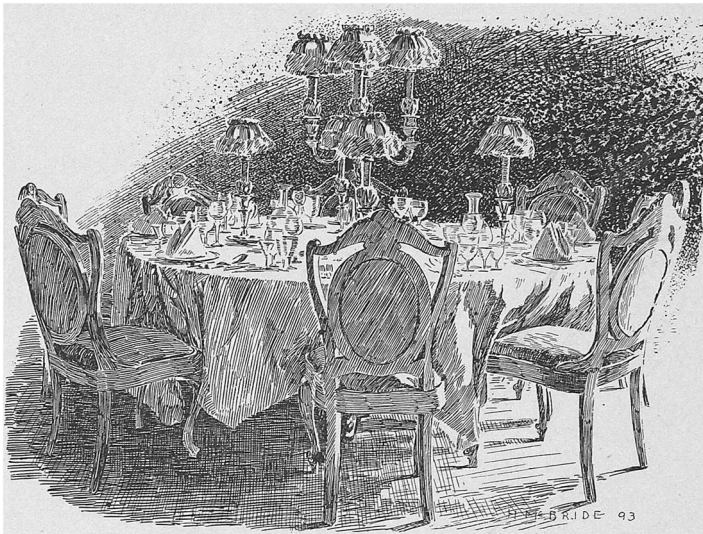
gorgeous attire, is a body of color of green-red and dark blue, his mouth wide open, and he seems to be flying homeward. For figure subjects, there is a Minton plate which is full of life and vim. Two men in hunting costumes, in which scarlet coats with broad-brimmed feathered hats, on horseback, make the picturesque center. The horses and dogs are of dun color, contrasting charmingly with the brilliant trees. It is simply a landscape in china with all its accessories.

Having had our surfeit of charms in the game chinaware, the dessert plates, which come in order, seem to us to be the perfection of the china-makers' skill—plates on which every sort of delicate confection is served, and are too beautiful even to be hidden by gastronomic delicacies.

One plate has for its cover a solid body of turquoise blue. In fact, this is the scheme of the plate, and for its design there are birds on branches, butterflies in air, all of which are cameo in treatment. The borders are open fret-work done in gold.

There are also two Coalports, in their way which are immense. The first has a rococo edge in ivory and gold. In the center is a man in the dress of the First Empire, a scene from one of Molière's plays. The other, the entire border is three inches wide, stripes of china interlaced and caught together by rosettes in which pink and gold are the scheme.

It is by the courtesy of Davis, Collamore & Co., that the writer is enabled to describe these beautiful works of art. In their spacious establishment all visitors can find at every season all sorts of novelties, which in form and shape are unrivalled.



PRIVATE DINING ROOM IN THE HOTEL SAVOY. DRAWN BY H. McBRIDE.